

A message notification portion 404, caller information portion 406, and other controls shown in the screen of **Figure 4** are also displayed to the user. The message notification portion includes voice mail, fax mail, and email icons with associated numbers indicating the number of messages received. In the example shown in **Figure 4**, the user, "John Q. Public" has seven voice messages and five fax messages, but zero email messages. Clicking on the icon 410 in the message notification portion 404 causes the user computer to automatically display appropriate graphical user interface (GUI) controls for accessing voice mail, fax mail, or email via associated applications.

[0039] The caller information portion 406 displays information regarding a newly received call, including the time, name of the incoming caller (based on a name associated with the CLI), title of the person, the incoming number, and the caller's associated company. The caller information portion also includes a call counter 408 that identifies a number of calls received by the user since the user last accessed the system. In addition to voice messages, calls answered by the user and fax messages received for the user are also numbered. The call counter may be reset manually. The call counter may alternatively be reset each time the user accesses the screen 401, or according to some other reset criteria.

[0040] A lower right-hand portion of the screen 401 identifies call-handling options for the user. An active extension indicator 412 indicates how incoming calls are currently handled. For example, whenever anyone calls the user at the number indicated in the screen, which is 206-621-3520, the call is routed based on call handling code "20 office." The user has previously defined that the call handling code 20 corresponds to forwarding calls received by the TSPS to the user's office phone. The user may define many differing call handling codes as previously described.

[0041] Three configurable call routing buttons 414 allow the user to route incoming calls in real-time. For example, the newly received caller information in window portion 406 describes an incoming call (that " Director of Product Marketing, Mark Sher" is calling). As the user views the information, the user can

choose to have the incoming call automatically routed to a message center by selecting button 418. The user can also choose to forward the call, for example to an attendant, by selecting button 420. The user can also select button 416 to have the call forwarded to a home number based on a predefined call routing option defined by the user as "10 home."

[0042] Many handling alternatives are available for incoming calls. For example, the user may right-click a mouse button on any of the buttons 416-420 to configure these buttons for different call handling options. Right-clicking on one of these buttons displays a dialogue box (not shown) that allows the user to select among several predefined options to be assigned to numerical codes and GUI buttons 416-420. In one embodiment, selecting the call forwarding button 420 causes a menu of predefined and configurable call handling options to be displayed to the user so that the user can dynamically route calls to a much larger number of destinations than are represented by the buttons shown in **Figure 4**.

[0043] Referring to **Figure 5**, the user can designate an attendant who also may control routing of the user's calls. As indicated by the icon and name portion 502, the user has designated Aaron Naselow as having permission to handle the user's calls. Aaron Naselow may monitor incoming user calls and handle such calls with the same ability as the user. Consequently, call control is distributed across a community of users.

[0044] Referring to **Figure 6**, a messaging screen 601 is shown that permits the user and one or more user-designated attendants to communicate via electronic messaging (similar to chat room communication). A portion 604 lists all other computer users the user may monitor and with whom the user may communicate. Clicking on one of the listed users, such as an "Aaron Naselow" listing 602, causes a message exchange window 605 to display a running text dialogue between the user and the other selected user. As shown in **Figure 1**, the user computer 111 may then communicate with the other selected computer, such as the attendant computer 118 via appropriate connections, such as a local area network 116. The system may be configured to exchange messages via any

known communication method, such as via the Internet or via wireless devices. The user enters text to send to the selected person in a text entry box 606. Such messaging may be performed using other messaging protocols, such as Short Messaging Service ("SMS"), instant messaging, etc.

[0045] Referring to **Figure 7**, an example of a system tray 702 in the Windows™ operating system is shown with an icon 704 that identifies to the user that new messages or calls have been received. Thus, a call processing agent under this embodiment runs continuously within the Windows™ operating system and provides an appropriate notification (through existing Windows™ APIs) to the user that incoming calls or messages have been received, as described more thoroughly herein.

[0046] The user configures the system using setup screens that are displayed by clicking the setup screen button 403. Setup will now be described with respect to **Figures 8-12**. Referring to **Figure 8**, when the user selects a "General" button 802, a general setup screen 804 is displayed to the user. The general setup screen allows the user to enter the user's telephone number and PIN, as well as select several options, such as saving the PIN, automatically signing on, starting the software application with display screens minimized, and protecting the PIN (such as using encryption or other known protection methods). Also displayed in the general startup screen is a text entry box in which the user enters a password for accessing the user's contact management system. Examples of contact management systems are Microsoft Outlook™ and Lotus Notes™. Clicking an "Update Contact List Now" button 806 updates the user's contacts in the contact information database 108 to correspond to the latest information in the contact management software database 114.

[0047] Referring to **Figure 9**, a "Notification" button 902 causes a notification setup screen 904 to be displayed. The notification setup screen 904 permits the user to select various notification options 906. Notification options include whether the user wishes to be notified when he or she receives new faxes, voicemail, email, one-number connection calls, or all generally received incoming